

Message Text

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NOTE: AMMAN 3753 AND STATE 177823 UPGRADED TO NODIS FM
EXDIS BY STATE 177826

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O 180058Z JUL 76
FM SECSTATE WASHDC
TO AMEMBASSY CAIRO IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY JIDDA IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY TEHRAN IMMEDIATE
AMEMBASSY MOSCOW IMMEDIATE

S E C R E T STATE 177823

NODIS

FOLLOWING REPEAT AMMAN 3753 ACTION SECSTATE INFO
DAMASCUS DTD 17 JUL

QTE AMMAN 3753

NODIS

E.O. 11652 GDS
TAGS: PFOR MOPS LE SY UR XF
SUBJECT: TALK WITH KING--MESSAGE FROM ASAD

REF: AMMAN 3751

SUMMARY: SEE REFTEL.

1. KING WAS IN TOUCH WITH ME AND ASKED ME TO COME TO PALACE EARLY
EVENING OF JULY 17 AFTER A SHORT WAIT WHILE HE SAW ORTOLI OF COMMON
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MARKET, HE ASKED ME INTO OFFICE. ALSO PRESENT WAS CROWN
PRINCE HASAN WHO HAD SAT IN ON MEETING WITH ORTOLI.

2. KING EXPLAINED THAT HE HAD SEEN SYRIAN FOREIGN MINISTER AND
DEPUTY PRIME MINISTER KHADDAM AFTERNOON JULY 17. HE WANTED TO SHARE

WITH THE US AT THE HIGHEST LEVELS THE GIST OF WHAT KHADDAM HAD TO SAY SAY INCLUDING A MESSAGE FROM ASAD WHICH KYADDAM HAD BROUGHT WITH HIM. KING SPOKE FROM SEIES OF NOTES IN ARABIC.

3. KING NOTED THAT MESSAGE AND TALKS WHICH HE HAD HELD CONCERNED THE SITUATION WHICH HE HAD EARLIER DESCRIVED FOR ME IN VAGUE TERMRS --IE CUBAN QUESTION. HE FELT NOW THAT HIS EARLIER DESCRIPTIONS HAD BEEN RATHER CONSERVATIVE WHEN IT CAME TO THE DANGERS. THE KING THEN ASKED ME SPECIFICALLY TO TAKE NOTES.

4. BY WA OF FURTHER PREFATORY COMMENT, KING MADE THE POINT THAT ASAD WANTED TO PASS ON HIS MESSAGE ALSO TO KING KHALID AND TO THE SHAH OR IRAN THROUGH KING HUSSEIN. KING ADDED THAT ASAD ALSO WANTED HUSSEN TO GET THE MESSAGE TO THE UNITED STATES. KING SAID HE WILL BE SEEING SHAH AT THE CASPIAN TOMORROW HERE HE WILL GO FOR THREE/FOUR DAYS. HE WILL SEND COURT MINISTER KHAMMASH TO SAUDI ARABIA JULY 18 TO SEE KING KHALID. IN ADDITION BECAUSE SADAT WILL BE THERE AS WELL HE WILL TRY TO ARRANGE AN APPOINTMENT FOR KHAMMASH TO BRIEF SADAT ON THE DETAILS OF WHAT ASAD HAD TO SAY.

5. KING BEGAN BY SAYING THAT ASAD CONSIDERS THE SITUATION IS EXTREMELY CRITICAL.HE THEN TOUCHED ON SOME RECENT DEVELOPMENTS. ASAD CLAIMED THAT THE LAST ARAB LEAGUE MEETING BEGAN WITH THE PLO BEING REASONABLE AND COOPERATIVE BUT THAT PART WAY THROUGH THERE WAS A GREAT CHANGE IN THE PLO ATTITUDE. ASAD CONCLUDED THAT THE PLO WAS PLAYING FOR TIME. GRADUCALLY IN THE MEETING THE PLO POSITION BECAME MORE EXTREME.

6.. THE PRESENT SYRIAN ATTITUDE TOWARD THE CRITICALITY OF THE SUTIATION IS A RESULT OF INCREASED SOVIET PRESSURE ON SYRIA. THE SOVIETS SENT THE SYRIANS A MESSAGE WHICH DEMANDED IMMEDIATE WITHDRAWL OF SYRIAN FORCES FROM LEBANON. THE SOVIETS ACCUSED THE SYRINAS OF COOPERATIN IN AN IMPERIALISTS PLOT TO DESTROY THE LEBANESE NAGIONAL MOVEMENT AND THE PALESTINIAN SECRET

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RESISTANCE. THE SOVIET NOTE ALSO MADE CLEAR THAT IF THE SYRIANS DID NOT COMPLY WITH THE SOVIET REQUEST THE SOVIET POSITION WOULD BECOME VERY HARD. THE SOVIETS SAID THEY WERE ANXIOUS TO MAINTAIN AND PRESERVE GOOD RELATIONS WITH SYRIA ONLY IF THE SYRIANS WERE PREPARED TO COOPERATE WITH SOVIET ATTITUDE AND POLICY TOWARD LEBANON. KHADDAM TOLD THE KING THAT IN SUM THE SOVIET MESSAGE WAS AN ULTIMATIM TO SYRIA.

6. KING THEN DESCRIBED KHADDAMS VISIT TO MOSCOW. KHADDAM SAID THAT HE HAD MET MANY TIMES WITH THE SOVIET LEADERSHIP AND PARTICULARLY MENTIONED FOREGN MINISTER GROMYKO. KHADDAM HAD REHEARESED OVER AND OVER AGAIN FOR GROMYKO THE SYRIAN POSITION NAD NAD ITS OBJECTIVES AND

INTERESTS IN LEBANON. HE WAS NOT ABLE TO CHANGE THE SOVIET PERCEPTION OF WHAT SYRIA WAS TRYING TO DO. AS A RESULT OF KHADDAMS MEETINGS AND THE SOVIET MESSAGE WHICH CAME LATER ASAD KING SAID HAD CONCLUDED THAT HE FACED THE "GRAVE DANGER" OF AN ANGOLA IN LEBANON. HE SAW IN PRESENT DEVELOPMENSS NEW VERY CLOSE COOPERATION DEVELOPING BETWEEN LIBYA,IRAQ AND THE PLO AND THE SOVIETS.

7. THE KING ALSO MENTIONED THAT THE SOVIET MESSAGE CAME AFTER THE SYRIANS FOUND OUT THAT JALLUD HAD SENT QADHAFI A MESSAGE RELAYED FROM THE PLO DEMANDING THAT SOVIETS BE URGED TO TAKE A VERY TOUCH LINE WITH SYRIA. THREE DAYS LATER THE "ULTIMATIM" ARRIVED FROM THE SOVIETS.

8. KING ALSO OFFERED WHAT HE SAID WERE BITS AND PIECES OF INFORMATION WHCIH HE SAID WERE GLANED FROM THE SYRIANS WHICH TENDEED TO DEMONSTRATE SERIOUSNESS OF THE SITUATION.THE SYRIANS SAID THAT A LEBANESE GUNBOAT UNDER CHRISTIAN CONTROL AND TRIED TO INVESTIGAE A REPORT THAT A SOVIET SHIP WAS UNLOADING IN TRIPOLI OR BRINGING FROM LIBYA SOVIET ARMS (IT WAS NOT CLEAR WHICH) THE LEBANESE BOAD HAD BEEN FIRED UPON BY AN UNKNOWN PURSUER EN ROUTE AND SYRIANS PRESUMED IT WAS THE SOVIETS. SYRIANS SAID THEY WERE CERTAIN FROM AIR RECONNAISSANCE AND OTHER SOURCES THAT SOVIETS HAD A NUMBER OF NAVAL VESSELS IN POSITION IN THE AREA.

9. SYRIANS REPORTED TO KING ON TWO AIRFIELDS UNDER CONSTRUCTIONS IN SOUTHERN LEBANON BY THE LEFT AND THE PALESTIIANS ONE HAS A RUNWAY
SECRET

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OF 800 METERS AND THE OTHER OF 2000 METERS SYRIANS TOLD THE KING THAT THEY BELIVE THAT IT IS MORE THAN PROBABLE THAT IRAQI, LIBYAN AND POSSIBLE CUBAN ELEMENTS WILL BEGIN TO ARRIVE BY AIR ALOING WITH ARMS AND AMMUNITION.

10. SYRIANS DETECT A RAL HARDENING IN THE PLO POSITION. THEY RD FREFUSED TO COME TO TEH SCHEDULED DAMASCUS MEETING JULY 16 SET UP IN ACCORD WITH AN ARAB LEAGUE RESOLUTION AND HAD ISSUED A PUBLIC STATEMENT ON THE POINT.

11. ASAD CONCLUDED KING SAYD THAT RELATIONS WITH THE SOVIETS ARE AT A CRUCIAL POINT. ASAD WILL NOT ALTER HIS PRESENT POLICY PSOTIONS OR ATTIDUES ON THE LEBANESE SITUATION. THERE ARE HOWEVER LIMITES TO WHAT HE CAN DO IN FACE OF HEAVY PRESSURE FROM THE SOVIES. ASAD IS ASKING HIS FRIENDS FOR HELP. THE SOVITS HAVE MANY MEANS OF BRINGING PRESSURE AGAINST HIM, INCLUDING AN ARMS CUTOFF AND HALTING THE SUPPLY OF MILITARY SPARE PARTS AND ECONOMIC ASSISTACE. THE PRINCIPAL POINT IS THAT ASAD WOULD LIKE TO KNOW WHETHER HE CAN RELY ON ALTERNATIVE SOURCES OF SUPPORT FROM HIS FRIENDS AND ELSEWHERE. KING MENTIONED THAT KHADDAM HAD SPECIFICALLY TALKES ABOUT SAUDI ARABIA, IRAN AND THE KING SAID THAT THE SYRIANS UNDERSTOOD THE SAME MESSAGE WOULD BE RELAYED TO THE US.

12. I ASKED THE KING WHAT JORDAN WOULD BE DOING. HE SAID THAT IT WAS UNDERSTOOD THAT JORDAN WOULD HELP SYRIA IN ANY WAY IT COULD IF THE GOING GOT ROUGH. IN ADDITION JORDAN WAS USING WHATEVER FRIENDS AND INFLUENCE IT HAD TO PASS ON THE WORD OF ASAD'S PLIGHT AND SEEK HELP. KING SAID HE WILL SPECIFICALLY BE TALKING WITH SHAH ABOUT THIS TOMORROW. KING NOTED THAT HE EXPECTS ASAD THAT SYRIAN-SOVIET SITUATION COULD WELL DEVELOP INTO ANOTHER EGYPT-SOVIET CRISIS OVER WEAPONS AND SPARE PART SUPPLY. ASAD ALSO POINTED TO THE RECENT ATTEMPT TO OVERTHROW NUMERRI IN THE SUDAN AND TO CERTAIN UNSPECIFIED DEVELOPMENTS IN EGYPT AS EVIDENCE OF LIBYAN--SOVIET MEDDLING.

13. ASAD'S ASSESSMENT KING SAID WAS THAT IF LEBANON GOES IT WILL BE A VERY SEVERE BLOW FOR THE AREA AND THAT KUWAIT AND THE SAUDIS MIGHT BE NEXT. KING COMMENTED THAT MANY PEOPLE THINK THAT ASAD HAS MORE INFLUENCE ON ME THAN I HAVE ON HIM, BUT LOOK AT THE WAY HE IS TALKING NOW. ASAD IS EVEN SAYING THAT HIS OWN PEOPLE ARE
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NOT PULLING BEHIND HIM THE WAY THE JORDANIANS LINED UP WITH HUSSEIN IN THE 1970 CRISES

14. KING THEN SAID THAT ASAD HAD ASSESSED THE COMMUNITY PART IN IRAQA AS BEING VERY STRONG. WHILE IT COOPERATED FULLY WITH THE IRAQI BAAATH NOW IN SPOITE OF THAT COOPERATION IT COULD MOVE OFF ON ITS OWN AGAINST THE REGIME.

15. ASAD ALSO NOTED ACCORDING TO THE KING THAT EGYPT HAD TERMINATED THE SOVIETS FLEETS USE OF ITS PORTS. SYRIA HAD BEEN ASKED BY THE SOVIET FOR USE OF ITS PORTS AND HAD REFUSED. ASAD NOW FEELS THAT THE SOVIETS ARE VERY INTERESTED IN OTHER FACILITIES AND RELATES THIS TO THE SOVIET STAND AGAINST SYRIA IN LEBANON.

16. ASAD POINTED OUT THAT A SOVIET ECONOMIC DELEGATION EXPECTED IN SYRIA JULY 14 HAD BEEN CANCELLED AND THAT SYRIA TOOK THIS AS A SIGNAL FROM THE SOVIETS ON FUTURE ECONOMIC AND MILITARY SUPPLY POLICY FROM MOSCOW. I ASKED THE KING WHETHER THE SOVIET ULTIMATUM THAT KHADDAM HAD TALKED ABOUT SPECIFICALLY SAID THAT THE SOVIET WOULD STOP MILITARY AID TO SYRIA. KING SAID THAT HE HAD NOT SEEN A COPY BUT THAT HIS IMPRESSION WAS THAT THE SOVIETS HAD ONLY IMPLIED THAT THEY WOULD STOP SUCH AID.

17. FOLLOWING MY RETURN TO THE EMBASSY THE KING CALLED AND SAID THAT HE HAD FORGOTTEN TO MENTION THAT ASAD HAD THE IMPRESSION THAT THE RIGHTIST WERE IN GOOD SHAPE NOW, BUT THAT IF THE SOVIETS CARRIED THROUGH WITH THEIR THREAT HE COULD NOT BE SURE HOW THEY WOULD FAIR.

18. COMMENT: IT APPEARS THAT ASAD AND POSSIBLY THE KING HAVE PULLED OUT ALL STOPS TO CONVINCE US THAT THE SOVIETS MEAN BUSINESS WITH THE SYRIANS OVER LEBANON. AS YOU KNOW FROM TIME TO TIME WE

HAVE RELAYED SEMIPANIC MESSAGES FROM ASAD PASSED BY THE KING.
WE ARE CLEARLY IN NO POSITION TO JUDGE VALIDITY. SOME PORTIONS
OF WHAT HAS BEEN PASSED ON HAVE GIVEN TO US EARLY BY THE KING. OTHER
PORTIONS SEEM TO TRACK WITH VARIOUS REPORTS WHICH WE HAVE SEEN
FROM MOSCOW, DAMASCUS AND BEIRUT. IN THE PAST WHEN WE HAVE RECEIVED
SUCH MESSAGES WE HAVE LATER TRIED TO CHECK BACK ON WHAT THE KING
HAS PASSED ON. IN NO INSTANCE HAVE WE BEEN ABLE TO FIND A
SITUATION WHERE THE KING'S MESSAGES HAVE BEEN DIRECTLY CONTRADICTED
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BY REPORTS FROM OTHER RELIABLE SOURCES: HOWEVER WE CANNOT PROVE THE
NEGATIVE--THE KING'S MESSAGES ALSO ARE NOT SHAPED TO FIT
HIS OWN IDEAS AND OBJECTIVES. IN THE PRESENT CASE THE KING'S
OWN APPROACH IS CLEARLY EXTREMELY CLOSE TO ASAD'S AFTER HEARING
THE AND APPARENTLY SUPPORTIVE STORY ABOUT THE POSSIBILITY
OF SOVIET PRESSURE ON THE SYRIANS' ARMS RELATIONSHIP. PART
OF THE I TOLD THE KING THAT IT SEEMED TO BE A GOOD THING
FOR HIM AND JORDAN THAT HE HAD NOT SIGNED UP AN AIR DEFENSE
DEAL WHEN HE WAS IN MOSCOW LAST MONTH. HE LAUGHED AND
SAID THAT IT CERTAINLY WAS. END COMMENT PICKERING UNQTE
ROBINSON

SECRET

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